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A Christmas Masque





THE HOLY NIGHT

By
FLORENCE CONVERSE

*A Masque to be Performed
by Young Children at
Christmas-Tide*

BOSTON
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THE HOLY NIGHT

Persons of the Masque

MARY — *She shall be a little maiden, fair-haired, and her gown shall be white, covered over with a long hooded cloak, sky blue. The hood she wear-eth about her face.*

JOSEPH — *He is a sturdy lad in a rough gown, long and brown. In his hand he holdeth a carpenter's wooden mallet; at his girdle do hang three iron nails, very large. JOSEPH hath a grizzled head, which may be powdered.*

THE HOLY CHILD — *This may be a little figure of wax or porcelain, fashioned very delicately.*

THE THREE SHEPHERDS — *They be three little lads, wearing short gowns of a light tanned color, and mantles of sheeps' skins; but if these be not convenient, they may wear cloaks of cotton-flannel, unbleached. And they must carry shepherds' crooks.*

THE THREE WISE MEN — *These shall be three boys of divers ages. The one which is MELCHIOR shall be fourteen years of age, or thereabout. He shall go bent, on a staff, with a beard flowing as far as to his waistband, and yet farther. This beard shall be white cotton, and tied about his chin. In his hand he beareth a crown of bright gold, or that appeareth like gold, which he shall give to THE HOLY CHILD.*

The other king, which is BALTHASAR, shall be of a swarthy countenance, or even a young negro, if such an one be at hand. Ten years of age shall he be. In his hand he lifteth up the box of ointment.

Now CASPAR is the most youngest of these three kings. He is a little lad of eight years, and walking he swingeth a censer. And all they three be turbaned as to their heads, and richly clad in long robes, and girded with a sash.

THE ANGELS — *All the little girls and young maidens shall be ANGELS. Their robes are white, long, and there are no sleeves; and crosswise on the breast be two bands of braided gold, narrow, and underneath a girdle of a third narrow band, a high girdle. These ANGELS' wings shall be tall, pointed, and white, or else golden.*

THE COCK — *He weareth a yellow vest, made to be rounded out with a little pillow beneath. A red coat he weareth, and the sleeves of this be cut and sewn after such a fashion that when he flappeth his arms these make a semblance of wings. And a green tail he weareth, which is made with many strips of cambric curved by wires and caught in a clustering knot.*

He hath a black cap, and on the top of this there standeth upright a cock's comb, bright red. Over his nose he weareth a sharp beak, but his mouth remaineth uncovered, that he may speak the more easily. Yellow are his stockings, and his shoes cut in three points on the toe. But at his heels there is a long spur. And if any little boy have very fat legs, he shall not play the part of the cock.

THE RAVEN — *This is a black bird. His tail standeth out stiff behind him. His beak is very long. His wings he must spread very wide when he will. Let him have black hair.*

THE LAMB — *He lieth on the ground beside the SHEPHERDS. He weareth a sheep's skin, or a white coat, and a little tail that he may frisk by a string what time he bleateth.*

THE OX AND THE ASS — *These two be only heads of pasteboard, which do lean out of window. It needs but one boy that shall speak for them twain, and nod the head of the Ox and wag the Ass his ears.*

AND NOW BEGINNETH THE MASQUE TO PLAY

THE Stage appeareth so and so: To the one side there may be the gable end of a little shed. This hath a door that shall open down its mid-length when the time appointed is come. Above, on the gable, sitteth an ANGEL; wherefore this framework needs be stout builded. To the one side and the other of the door ANGELS stand likewise. All these three have a face as of one that waiteth, thinking his own thoughts; neither are they observed of the SHEPHERDS nor of the BEASTS. In that side of the shed most near the front of the stage shall be a little window, and the OX and the ASS look forth. Over against this shed a little mound riseth up — and mayhap it is made of sand — and on this the COCK is perched, who anon doth rake with his toes in the sand, anon he pecketh at the RAVEN, which walketh sedate about the heap of sand, or resteth still with his head covered underneath his wing in the seemly fashion of his kind. But ere long he must walk again. Now, midway betwixt this little shed and this mound, and in the front of the stage, the SHEPHERDS lie on the ground, and their LAMB with them. And the SHEPHERDS sing.

THE SHEPHERDS' SONG

King David was a shepherd lad,
A ruddy countenance he had,
He harped for Saul when Saul was sad.
Alleluia!

He slew the lion and the bear;
No hungry beast henceforth may dare
Draw nigh the flock in David's care.
Alleluia!

A shepherd reigned in Israel,
A shepherd reigned, our fathers tell,
A shepherd reigned, and all was well.
Alleluia!

King David's greater Son shall reign,
Shall reign and triumph yet again,
And lead the nations in his train.
Alleluia!

O Shepherds, now rejoice, and weep!
This Shepherd-King, His flock to keep,
Shall lay His life down for the sheep.
Alleluia!



The Play

THE COCK (*he flappeth his wings and crieth*)—
Cock-a-doodle-doo! Cock-a-doodle-doo!

THE OX (*he noddeth his head*)—Oooooee! Oooooee!

THE RAVEN (*he spreadeth his two broad wings*)—
Cawn! Cawn!

FIRST SHEPHERD — What a clatter do these
beasts make!

THE ASS (*he waggeth one ear and the other alter-
nate*) — Haw-Hay! Haw-Hay!

THE LAMB (*he maketh his little tail to frisk*)—
Ba-a-a!

SECOND SHEPHERD — And thou too, silly one!
Go to sleep!



THIRD SHEPHERD — My Grandam saith that one day the beasts shall speak.

SECOND SHEPHERD — When?

THIRD SHEPHERD — 'Tis but a tale of my Grandam.

FIRST SHEPHERD — Tell it!

SECOND SHEPHERD — Yea; tell it! The night is long.

THE ASS — Haw-Hay! Haw-Hay!

THIRD SHEPHERD — My Grandam saith, that night Messiah is born, all the beasts shall speak. 'T was a wise woman told her.

SECOND SHEPHERD — When think you Messiah shall be born?

FIRST SHEPHERD — Not in our time, I trow. Shall not hap in our time but these heavy taxings.

SECOND SHEPHERD — Grumble not — 'tis a good year with the sheep.

THE LAMB — Ba-a-a!

THE THREE ANGELS (*they put the finger to the lip and say*) — Hush-sh!

THIRD SHEPHERD (*he speaketh soft*) — Heard you not a voice? What was 't?



THE THREE ANGELS — Hush-sh!

And for a full minute shall not be any sound in that place. Only the STAR OF BETHLEHEM shall rise, being drawn up on a thread, till it hang above the gable of the little shed. Then shall the COCK flap his wings and cry in a mighty voice.

THE COCK — Christus natus est! Christus natus est!

SECOND SHEPHERD — Hark you! The bird spake!

FIRST SHEPHERD — And in the Roman tongue.

Then these SHEPHERDS sit as lost in a maze.

THE COCK — Christus natus est! Christus natus est!

THE RAVEN (*he stretcheth his wings*) — Quando? Quando?

THIRD SHEPHERD — But these be learned fowl!

THE RAVEN (*as he were impatient*) — Quando? Quando?

THE ASS (*he twirleth one of his ears*) — Hac nocte! Hac nocte!



SECOND SHEPHERD (*he whispereth as it were fearfully to his brethren*) — Didst hear the Ass said, Messiah is born to-night?

FIRST SHEPHERD — How shall an Ass know?

THE COCK — Christus natus est! Christus natus est!

THE RAVEN — Quando? Quando?

THE ASS — Hac nocte! Hac nocte!

THE OX (*he noddeth his head and speaketh slow*) — Ubi? Ubi?

THIRD SHEPHERD — Yea; where?

THE LAMB — Be-e-e-e-th-le-hem! Be-e-e-e-th-le-hem!

SECOND SHEPHERD — Nay; I'll not believe that!

THE COCK — Christus natus est! Christus natus est!

THE RAVEN — Quando? Quando?

THE ASS — Hac nocte! Hac nocte!

THE OX — Ubi? Ubi?

THE LAMB — Be-e-e-e-th-le-hem! Be-e-e-e-th-le-hem!



THE THREE ANGELS — Alleluia!

*And there is a sound as of many voices of Angels
which sing unseen — Alleluia!*

THE ANGEL ON THE GABLE (*she speaketh to the SHEPHERDS*) — Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this *shall be* a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

THE ANGELS — Alleluia!

Now immediately are the heavens opened, which by-meaneth that there hath been around the back and sides of this stage, some two feet separate from the wall, a dark curtain, and, this being withdrawn, there are disclosed ANGELS, as many as may be, which stand in a long row a four foot space from the floor, on a narrow scaffold builded close by the wall. The ANGELS be garmented like to the three, but they stand close one after one: their hands are laid crosswise on their breasts and their wings do rise up in points folded above their heads. And from henceforth, while this Masque dureth, the ANGELS shall



*stand here, and it is their part to sing "Alleluia!"
But first do they chaunt, immediately the curtain
is withdrawn.*

THE ANGELS — Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace, good will to men. The people
that walked in darkness have seen a great light:
they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death,
upon them hath the light shined.

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given:
and the government shall be upon his shoulder:
and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor,
The Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, The
Prince of Peace.

*Now when the HEAVENLY HOST hath chaunted
after this fashion, the two ANGELS beside the
door of the little shed do fold back the leaves of the
door. And within are seen MARY and JOSEPH,
sitting, and betwixt them two the HOLY CHILD
lieth on a tuft of straw in a little box which shall
be called the Manger.*

MARY (*she foldeth one against the other her two
hands and singeth soft to the HOLY CHILD*).

Sleep, little Shepherd-King,
Sleep while I sing.



ANGELS (*very soft*) — Alleluia!

Sweet Son, wilt suffer pain?
King — be not King in vain!
Conquer and reign!

ANGELS (*very soft*) — Alleluia!

Shepherd — Thy flock wilt keep?
Fall not in death asleep;
Stay with the sheep!

ANGELS (*very soft*) — Alleluia!

My little Lamb, my Son,
My little Human One,
Thy will be done.

ANGELS (*very soft*) — Alleluia!

Sleep, little Shepherd-King,
Sleep while I sing.

ANGELS (*very soft*) — Alleluia!

*The SHEPHERDS draw anear. They kneel one after
one, in a straight row.*

FIRST SHEPHERD — Is this Messias?

MARY — Yea.

THIRD SHEPHERD (*he peereth over his brother's
shoulder*) — Born in a stable?



SECOND SHEPHERD — 'T is a shepherd, bethink thee. I have slept in a stable full oft; yet many a time had I not even a shed to cover me. I have slept 'neath the open sky.

FIRST SHEPHERD — And I too.

THIRD SHEPHERD — And I.

SECOND SHEPHERD — If this be King, must He not be worshiped?

MARY — Yea; come nigh! See, He is a very child.

They come yet more close to the door.

ANGELS — Alleluia!

Now the THREE WISE MEN do enter. MELCHIOR is the first; after him cometh CASPAR, and BALTHASAR is the last.

MELCHIOR — What may this place be?

THE LAMB — Be-e-e-e-th-le-hem.

ANGELS — Alleluia!

BALTHASAR — Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him.



THE COCK — Christus natus est! Christus natus est!

THE SHEPHERDS (*they stand aside out of the door*)
— This is He — this Babe. Come and worship!

THE THREE WISE MEN (*they sing that old hymn, "We Three Kings of Orient are," as followeth*).

THREE WISE MEN —

We three Kings of Orient are;
Bearing gifts we traverse afar
Field and fountain, moor and mountain,
Following yonder star.

MELCHIOR —

Born a King on Bethlehem's plain,
Gold I bring to crown Him again,
King for ever, ceasing never,
Over us all to reign.

Chorus —

We three Kings, etc.

CASPAR —

Frankincense to offer have I,
Incense owns a Deity nigh;
Prayer and praising, all men raising,
Worship Him, God most high.

Chorus —

We three Kings, etc.



BALTHASAR —

Myrrh is mine, its bitter perfume
Breathes a life of gathering gloom;
Sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying,
Sealed in the stone-cold tomb.

Chorus —

We three Kings, etc.

THREE WISE MEN —

Glorious now behold Him arise,
King, and God, and Sacrifice!
Alleluia, Alleluia!
Earth to the heavens replies!

*Then they do kneel and MARY taketh the gifts and
layeth them in the Manger beside the HOLY
CHILD.*

THE SHEPHERDS — Why may we not give
gifts?

CASPAR — Yea, do so!

SECOND SHEPHERD — What have we, poor
shepherds? Nothing!

FIRST SHEPHERD — I have a little ball; Babe
likes a ball.

THIRD SHEPHERD — Here have I a bob o'
cherries, red cherries. Would Babe laugh to see
the red?



SECOND SHEPHERD — This lamb is my little lamb; wilt have him for thy little Lamb, Mother? Two lambs, snow-white?

Now do the Shepherds give these gifts.

ANGELS — Alleluia!

THE ANGEL ON THE GABLE — Joseph!

JOSEPH (*he cometh out of the door and looketh up*)
— Here am I.

THE ANGEL ON THE GABLE — Arise, and take the young child and His mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word; for Herod will seek the young child to destroy Him.

JOSEPH — Well, I must saddle the ass; we go away.

THE ASS (*he speaketh in surprise and some discontent*) — Hac nocte?

JOSEPH — Yea; it must be. We go away.

THE OX — Ubi?

JOSEPH — Into Egypt, the Angel said.

MARY — But He shall come again to dwell in Nazareth.



THE RAVEN — Quando?

MARY — That shall be when the Lord willeth.

THE COCK—Christus natus est! Christus natus est!

Now doth MARY arise. JOSEPH hath his hand on the head of the ASS. On the one side of the door there stand an ANGEL and the THREE SHEPHERDS, on the other side of the door an ANGEL and the THREE WISE MEN.

The COCK standeth still upon his mound, the RAVEN is below. Then do all the ANGELS, the SHEPHERDS, the WISE MEN, the COCK, the RAVEN, the LAMB, the OX, the ASS, MARY, JOSEPH, and all they that do sit in Audience to hear this Masque, sing with a loud voice and right joyfully, the first stanza and the third of the hymn called "Adeste, Fideles."

Oh, come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant;
Oh, come ye, oh, come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold Him, born the King of angels;
Oh, come, let us adore Him,
Oh, come, let us adore Him,
Oh, come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.



Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation;
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above;
Glory to God in the highest;
 Oh, come, let us adore Him,
 Oh, come, let us adore Him,
 Oh, come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.

AND THIS IS THE END OF THE MASQUE.

Mark these things: —

*If there be any child that knoweth no Latin, he is to be told that
Christus natus est signifieth Christ is born, Quando signifieth
When, Hac nocte signifieth This night, Ubi signifieth Where.*

*Now this shall be the music of The Shepherds' Song: the old
tune, "Oh, Sons and Daughters. Let us sing."*



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